Our Hitler
Goebbels' 1944 Speech on Hitler's 55th Birthday

German citizens!
Not only fortune, but also reputation is always shifting during a war between great men and nations. It is therefore difficult, perhaps even impossible, to determine the political and military importance of individual events in the midst of war. What yesterday seemed a brilliant move can within several weeks or months prove a major mistake, and that which seemed shortsighted and mistaken can later become a decision of deep wisdom. Only when a war is over, and usually some time after that, once its lasting results have become clear to all, is it possible to objectively weigh and evaluate its individual events.

That was true of every past war, and presumably of this one as well. The war can be evaluated only as a whole. Beside the events of the moment, a war has larger historical significance. Only a trained and practiced eye can understand that larger significance during the war itself. For example, consider the vast differences in Frederick the Great's reputation during the Seven Year War, particularly from 1760 to 1763. His personal reputation and that of his work during his day was influenced by partisan considerations, but today we evaluate him historically, that is, objectively and justly. His individual actions and decisions were evaluated in various ways. Given the circumstances of the time, some seemed to lead to victory, others to defeat. Even those in his entourage could not properly evaluate them.

A genius acts from instinct, sometimes consciously but often unconsciously, which raises his actions out of the ordinary sphere. Great, timeless personalities have to fulfill not only the tasks of the moment, but larger historical missions as well. Unfortunately, the two do not always agree. A war of vast historical significance brings with it the heaviest sacrifices and burdens. The less these problems are seen by people in their broader historical significance, the likelier the struggling generation will be misunderstand them, or even to think them avoidable. This explains why those at the time and posterity evaluate historical events differently. We can think of numerous historical examples. We can hardly understand today

why the contemporaries of Alexander the Great or Caesar or Frederick the Great did not understand their true significance. To us there are no secrets any more.

It is somewhat surprising that those who may get the most excited about historical misunderstandings are also the ones who are least able to make the proper historical judgment regarding their own day. They are people who have the ability to evaluate the events and developments of earlier eras, but who lack the capacity to judge the historical happenings of their own era in a way that posterity will respect.

Which of the events of the present war will be significant in a hundred years? It is difficult to judge individual events, but even today, one can with some assurance predict the factors that will influence posterity's evaluation of this great drama of the European peoples. It is not a matter of things whose traces, even by our present understanding, will have vanished several years after the war is over. For example, few signs of the damage to Germany's cities caused by enemy air terror are likely to remain ten years after peace comes. What is likely to be recalled are the attitudes and behavior of those who withstood the terror.

Whether Europe becomes Bolshevist or whether we succeed in rescuing our continent and its people from this deadly threat will influence the future of many, perhaps all, future generations. This is the decisive historical significance of this war. The man who in the end frees our continent from its spiritual and military difficulties will be at the conclusion of the vast struggle, from the standpoint of history, the man of the war.

That does not change the fact that his opponents have done and are doing everything in their power to hinder the historical mission of the man who stands above his times. They are using their material superiority in population and weapons in an attempt to bring his work to naught. All this will only increase the honor history will give him and add immortal fame to his name. Once the foul mist of vile and despicable wartime polemics has lifted, he will suddenly appear as the great historical figure of this enormous international drama, both to the living and even more to the coming generations. And what of his opponents, who were ready and willing to throw the two thousand year history and civilization of our continent into

chaos? They will be of interest only as the dark background to the greatness and foresight of this shining figure.

Was not this also true when we were fighting for power? How often did the Führer battle long forgotten political parties when rescuing the Fatherland? How often did cowardly journalists attempt to persuade us that they were not only his equal, but his political superiors! Today even their names are forgotten. All that remains is the historical personality, one who stands above his times, and who despite all the challenges that sometimes seemed insurmountable found the solution to the German dilemma and saved the nation.

Victory determined everything then, as it will today. The end of this war will bring with it either the end of European history and any historical meaning from our point of view, or our victory will give our continent a chance for a new beginning. The fame belongs alone to the man who saved Europe from its most terrible danger, who despite the turns of triumph and defeat came through at the end and thereby saved not only his own nation, but the continent. This conclusion springs not from any desire for fame or national superiority, which is granted nonetheless by the sense of justice of the best in every nation who understand the graveness of the hour.

I am sure that I speak to the heart not only of every old National Socialist, but to that of every German. We all feel part of a historic mission. For us, the goal of the war is not only clear, it is also unalterable and unchangeable. The longer the war lasts, the more fanatically and committedly we pursue it. To seek the goal means to follow the Führer, to do his work with loyalty and devotion, to turn in the midst of the storms of the war every personal thought and deed toward him. We are happy to have him on our side, for he incorporates not only our firm faith in victory, but also the constancy of our national leadership, the character of our war outlook, and the integrity of our war aims. We only need to look over our borders to foreign and enemy peoples to see what he means to the nation and what he is to us all. It is easy and comfortable during times of great national successes, especially when they have been achieved without great cost of blood and sacrifice, to join the crowds of those shouting praises for the accomplishments of the national leadership, which everyone can see. It is harder to stay loyal to the cause in the middle of a long struggle for a nation’s very existence. Such a

struggle demands the full energy of those who are not spared periods of sleeplessness or even occasional nervous exhaustion. The harder and more bitter the circumstances, the more their deeper historical significance is revealed.

We old National Socialists have never seen the Führer in a different role. Our greatest honor was always to stand by him in such hours, to protect his rear as he stepped forward into still unknown and dangerous territory, to give him the certainly that he was never alone. The National Socialist movement, the core of our present national community, developed in circumstances like these. The virtues of our movement, which overcame all barriers and obstacles during the hard years of the struggle for power, have become during this war the virtues of our fighting people, tested a million fold by trial and danger: Our loyalty to ourselves finds its most visible but also its deepest expression in our loyalty to the Führer.

When has there ever been such a fruitful relationship between a people and its leader, and vice versa? People of other countries see their leaders as the representatives of class interests, of parliamentary majorities more or less cleverly constructed, as necessary evils in the absence of a better alternative, or as the result of blind mass terror that stands upon millions of corpses. For us, the Führer is the spokesman and the agent of the will of the whole nation. Despite all the prophecies of the enemy, there has not been a single case, from the beginning of the war until today, in which a soldier broke his oath to the Führer or in which a worker in the home front renounced his loyalty to the Führer by ceasing his labors.

We know that the enemy is unable to understand this, and attributes it to force or violence. But what we as a people and leadership have accomplished cannot be brought about by such methods. Other forces must be at work, forces of loyalty and community that cannot be understood by people who are unable to perceive them. That which we sowed before the war begun has grown to fruition: the rich harvest of solidarity between the leadership and the whole people.

Permit me the freedom in this speech to say some things to the entire German people, at home and at the front, about the Führer personally. I have had the good fortune to be at his side during the period of struggle for

power and during this great war, to be present at many, indeed most, of the particularly happy and critical hours. I never saw him doubt or waver. He always followed the call of his blood, and where it called he went, regardless of the difficulties. He stands above all other statesmen of our time in that he recognized danger at the proper time and took courageous action. The German people thanks him for that today, as will one day all of civilized humanity.
If there is a divine gift to leading peoples and nations which allows great historical leaders to perceive instinctively the necessary and right, and to combine this knowledge with an unerring sense of what needs to be done at the moment, he is that fortunate man. That the parliamentary mayflies on the other side fail to realize this is more a proof of his abilities than of their absence. Even the best leadership sometimes suffers defeats and reverses. They are in fact the test that proves its merits. For all people and nations, war is a hard and pitiless force that separates the strong from the weak and the industrious from the lazy.

Has the Reich and its leadership ever failed the test? Have we ever stood confused and desperate before an approaching fate, unsure of what to do? We have always stood ready. A man always stood at the head of our people who was a bright and shining example. Even under the hardest blows he stood firm and the confidence of his heart turned the greatest misfortunes to our advantage. We don’t speak about it often, but we all know it. Never have the German people looked with such faith toward its Führer as in the days and hours when it knew the full gravity of the situation. It did not lose heart, but rather affirmed even more firmly and strongly its goals.

When we looked back on November 1918, we could not rid ourselves of the bitter feeling that it was in part our own responsibility. This time we have earned victory, and the goddess of history will not withhold it from us. The price of our coming victory is our loyalty. The war is not an occasion for loose talk and empty promises. It is a time to realize what we have so often said in the past. It depends on our oath to the flag and on the silent oath in our hearts.

Wherever in Europe our soldiers stand in battle or on watch, wherever Germans work, wherever German farmers sow and harvest, wherever inventors, artists, and scholars ponder with crinkled brow the future of the

Reich, wherever mothers hope for victory and children trust in it with quiet confidence, in distant nations and continents, on every ocean, wherever Germans breathe, the warmest wishes from the truest hearts for the Führer rise to the above.

The fact that he stands at the head of our nation is for us all the surest sign of coming victory. Never was he so near to us as in the moment of danger; never were we so bound to him, as when we felt that he needed us as we needed him. Through this, we have dashed the great hopes of our enemy. They hoped that we would do what they could not. It was the only way we could be defeated. We have done what is necessary for victory. I am happy to speak to the German people at this hour. We have affirmed in the past year our support and our confidence in the Führer's work. On his birthday, we want also to speak the words that come from the depths of our heart. We want to tell him what he is to us all, both in the trials of the moment and in the shining future.

We all wish him health, strength, and a fortunate hand. He must know that he can always rely on his people. When trial and danger is before him, we will stand more firmly behind him. We believe in him and in his historical mission, and believe that in the end he will be crowned with victory. He will be the man of the century, not his opponents. He gave this century its meaning, its content, its goal. Affirming the meaning and understanding the content, we will reach the goal. He points the way. He commands, we follow. We, his old and tested comrades, march in the first row behind him. We are tested by danger, steeled by misfortune, hardened by storm and trial, but also crowned with the first victories and successes of the coming new world. We are at the head of a countless multitude who carry and defend the future of the Reich.

We defend the cause of the nation, which has found its visible form in the Führer. In this battle between life and death, he is and will remain for us what he always was: Our Hitler!